

10 Tips For Surviving The Festive Season

Are you nervous at the thought of holidays, festive treats and delightful delicacies? Are you afraid of losing that healthy streak?? or putting back all those lost kilo's that you have worked so hard to lose over the last few months or year? Well, there's no need to be concerned as we have tips that will help you survive the season ensuring that you stay healthy, confident and feeling successful.

Holidays are usually associated with plenty of fun and relaxing days socialising and eating out whether it's dinner at friends, a braai on the beach or sundowners at sunset. Whichever you prefer, remember moderation is the key to successful weight loss, maintenance of weight or just healthy eating principles.

Helpful Tips:

➤ **Don't be too hard on yourself**

Everyone has their not so good days, so don't despair if you happen to experience this. Rather focus on the positive steps that you have succeeded with, such as choosing healthy snacks or having just one slice of that decadent chocolate cake. Try to get support from others in the same boat as you or chat to a friend-Always forgive yourself!

➤ **Healthful Shopping**

Keeping healthy snacks and food choices in the home will ensure that you always stay on track. The greatest way to achieve this is to shop healthy. Use a shopping list and stick to it. Never shop when you are hungry. Read food labels and opt for low fat, high fibre items. Shopping during the holidays and closer to the festive days can be daunting. To avoid frustration, try to shop during the more "quieter" times like late evenings (if that's an option) or early mornings (before the rush). If you're going away, purchase those healthy snacks in advance, so whether you're on the road or in the air, you'll have it at hand.

➤ **Acknowledge your cravings**

Never ignore your cravings -it will only lead to binge eating, feelings of guilt and self-loathing. Also, don't always satisfy your cravings with a healthy substitute as you probably will not be gratified and might end up binging on that chocolate or whatever your heart was set on. It's fine to have a small portion of that desirable piece of cake or chocolate and acknowledge that it's a choice and not a cheat! Having a piece of that Christmas cake is not going to cause weight gain, provided it does not happen more often than usual!

➤ **Get Fruity**

We all know how important eating plenty of fruits and vegetables is! Apart from the fact that they make great snacks, they are refreshing and easy to carry in your handbag. Buy them in season and vary the preparation methods to increase consumption. You can make delicious smoothies, fruit/ vegetable platters, fruit scones or muffins, fruit/ vegetable kebabs, fruit pancakes, fruity yoghurts (low fat), veggie sticks with a low fat dip or cool summer salads!

➤ **Note the portions**

Eating the correct foods is a great way to achieve those weight loss goals but eating too much of these can also impede your efforts. Remember it's the total amount of calories and as well as your fat intake that needs to be closely monitored. Having that extra piece of chicken or slice of bread can contribute to that unwanted weight gain. It's vital that you stick to the recommended portion sizes when trying to shift a few kilo's. Examples of how a few EXTRA portions of healthier low fat foods can increase your overall total calorie intake:

- 200g skinless chicken breast = 200 calories
- 1 glass of skimmed milk = 90 calories
- 1 slice of whole-wheat bread + 30g (matchbox size) low fat mozzarella cheese = 160 calories
- 1 glass red wine = 125 calories

➤ **Snack Away**

Snacking is the key to curbing those hunger pangs! Having small, low fat snacks between main meals ensures that your blood sugar levels are maintained so that you don't binge or overeat at the next meal. Quick snacks include fruits, low fat fruit/plain yoghurts, crackers and low fat cheese, bran muffins, home-made popcorn, pretzels, corn thins or rice cakes. Be sure to take these healthier snacks along when you travel, thus preventing you from tucking into those chocolates and crisps.

➤ **Drink up!**

Have plenty of water! The sizzling hot summers can potentially dehydrate you if your fluid intake is not adequate or too many alcoholic or caffeinated drinks are consumed without replacing the fluids lost. The

golden rule: Drink 1-2 glasses of water after an alcoholic or caffeinated drink. If you are playing sports on the beach for long hours, rehydrate with an energy drink to replace the lost sodium and potassium. Other drinks include diet cordials, sugar-free fizzy drinks, fruit juices, milkshakes (ensure they are low fat/fat free) or decaffeinated tea and coffee. Always keep a water bottle with you - either in your car, handbag or in the living room. Seeing it will constantly remind you to drink up!

➤ **Heart Healthy and Slimming Menu Choices**

Eating out need not be a daunting task as you can still enjoy socialising without gaining weight. Learn how to identify the unhealthy menu items, allowing you to then choose the healthier options. Avoid food choices with words like fried, creamy, cheesy, rich, supersized or jumbo and rather choose moderate portions of baked, steamed, grilled or braaied foods. If the serving size is large, opt to share it or request a “doggie” bag. You don’t have to eat everything on your plate! For more tips on eating out, see our previous article titled “Dining Out”. Also visit our website at www.heartfoundation.co.za, where you will find a list of heart mark approved restaurants.

➤ **Get up and go!**

Exercise or physical activity is often viewed as going to the gym or joining some fitness class. This does not have to be the case! You can still enjoy plenty of physical activity without being a member of the gym or a class. You can exercise at home, on the beach, at a friend’s house or just about wherever you feel comfortable. Apart from weekdays, exercise should be done on weekends as well as holidays. It could be anything from a brisk walk to the park, a jog on the beach, a game of volleyball in the garden or even skipping in your backyard. Don’t be a couch potato and get moving! It’s the best thing you can do for your heart and that waistline!

➤ **Stay Committed and Motivated**

Always bear in mind that there is no quick fix solution to weight loss. Realise that only a healthy eating plan and regular exercise will help you shed those unwanted kilo’s and maintain that weight loss. At the outset, you need to remember that commitment and motivation will ensure success.

Christmas Fruit Cake

[Recipe from Eating for Sustained Energy 2 by Gabi Steenkamp RD (SA) and Liesbet Delpont RD (SA)
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Ingredients

1 cup water
½ cup fat free milk
½ cup soft margarine
½ cup sultanas
250g packet dried apricot halves, roughly chopped
250g packet dried prunes, pitted
250g packet dried peach halves, roughly chopped
2 tablespoons currants
½ cup white sugar
1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
¼ teaspoon salt
10 pecan nut halves, chopped
¾ cup cake flour
1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
1 teaspoon baking powder
⅓ cup oat bran
1 cup wholewheat pronutro
1 apple, peeled and finely grated
1 egg
½ teaspoon almond essence
1 egg white, beaten

Method

- ✚ In a large saucepan, place the water, milk, margarine, fruit, sugar, bicarbonate of soda, salt and nuts. Simmer over low heat for 20 minutes.
- ✚ Remove from the heat, pour into a large bowl and allow to completely cool.
- ✚ Pre-heat the oven to 160°C.
- ✚ Sift the flour, bicarbonate of soda and baking powder over the cooled mixture.

- ✚ Add the oat bran, whole-wheat pronutro and the grated apple and mix gently with a wooden spoon.
- ✚ Beat the egg and almond essence together and add the batter.
- ✚ Whisk the egg white and fold it into the mixture.
- ✚ Spoon the batter into a non-stick baking pan and bake for 2 hours or until the skewer comes out clean.
- ✚ Allow to cool completely, store in an airtight container or cover with foil and store for 2 days in the fridge before eating.
- ✚ Serve plain or with low fat custard.

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